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**Wings On Her Land**

**Project On My Great  
Grandmother, Her Land And  
Her Home**

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**Young Historian  
Awards '25-'26**

**History is not just about famous people and big events. It can also be about our own families. This project is about my grandmother and the land she lives on. The land was important to her because it helped support her family and held many memories. By learning about my grandmother and her land, can understand more about our family's past and how it connects to history.**



**Researching family history is crucial since it enables people to comprehend their origins, identity, and roots. People can develop a greater sense of connection and belonging by learning about the lives, customs, and struggles of their ancestors through studying previous generations. Additionally, it keeps memories and tales alive that could otherwise be lost to future generations. In this sense, family history preserves significant cultural and familial customs while simultaneously bolstering individual identity.**

**That's why I decided to do my project on my family's history. I did briefly look into it in my CBA in Second year however now I looked into it in more detail and learned a lot more about my great grandmother.**

# **My Great-Grandmother - Tersea Sekula**

**Born 1938 · Still Living**

**Daughter of Zofia · Keeper of the Land**

**She was raised among the destruction and reconstruction of war, having been born into Poland on the verge of its worst chapter. Along with the property in Stare Zadybie, she also received the tales of the people who lived and died there. She is still living in her house, which used to be filled with the sounds of airplane engines and the silent labor of nurses, even though she is over 86 years old.**

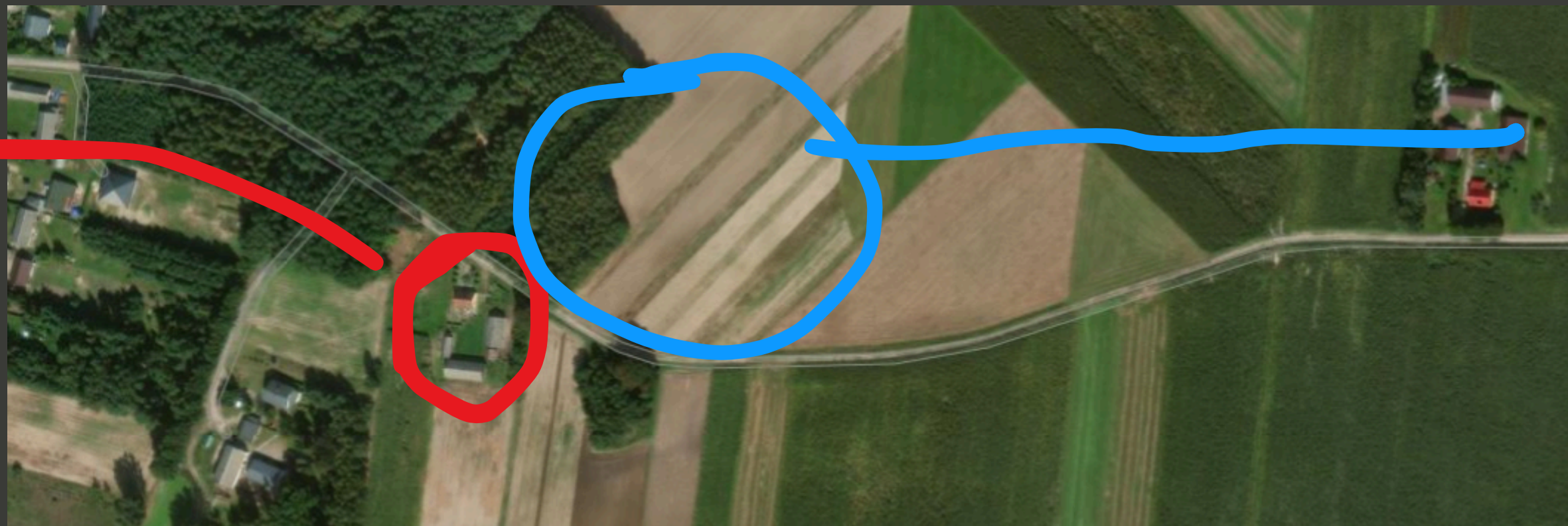
**Her life, which stretches from a war-torn country to a peaceful one on the same territory, is one of remarkable continuity.**



my great-grandmother was born in Stare Zadybie in 1938, barely a year before Nazi Germany invaded Poland and started the European War. When the war started, she was a baby; when airplanes flew overhead, she was a child; and when peace eventually came to Polish territory, she was a young girl.

She was raised in the same home that had once been a medical facility. The Yak-1 fighters had taken off from the same spot where she was walking. She continues to live in Stare Zadybie today, over 86 years later, serving as a living link between the peaceful present and the wartime reality in which her mother Zofia cared for the injured.

Medical  
Centre ( Her  
House)



The Airport  
(Her  
Feilds, Land  
and Foresty)

**My great great grandmother - Zofia Machalweska**

**Born 1904 · Died 1991**

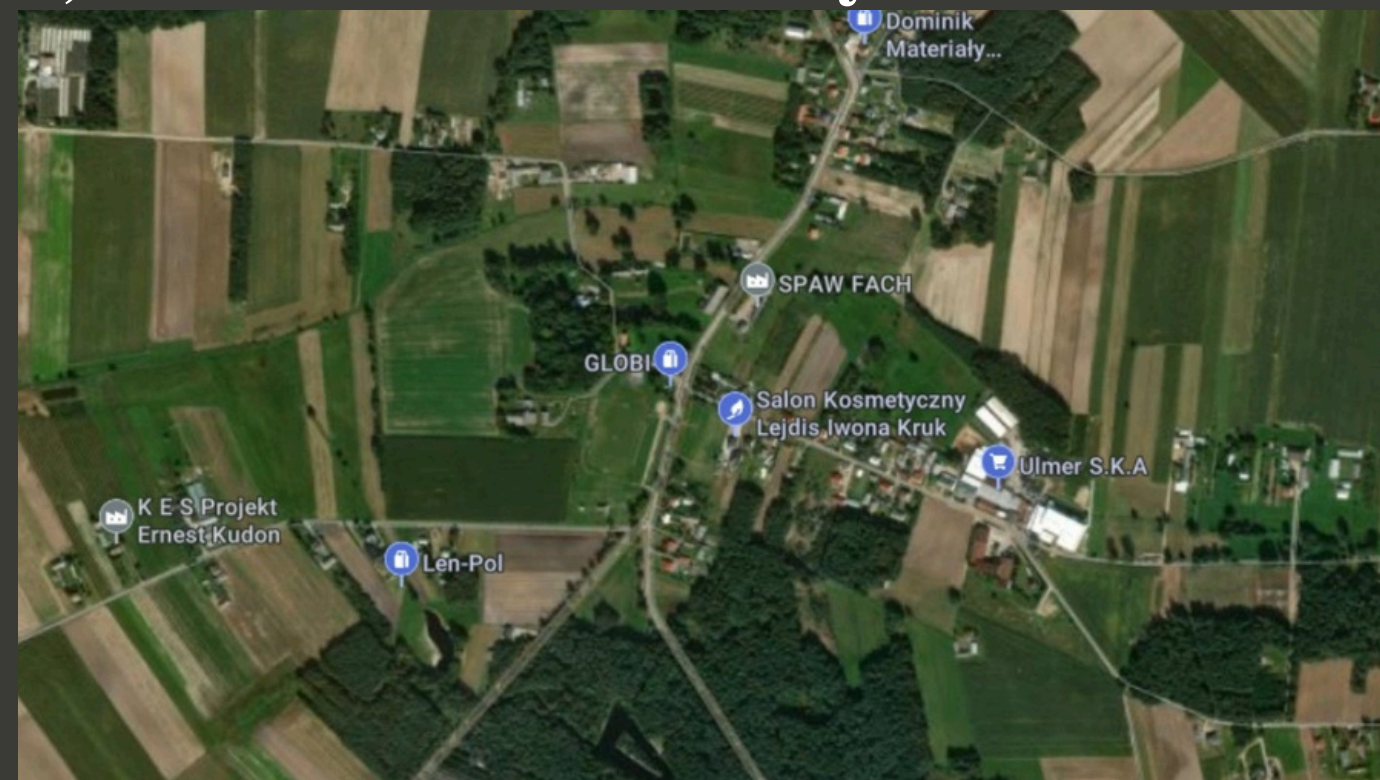
**Nurse · Caregiver · Mother · Survivor**

**Born in 1904 into a Poland still split between empires, Zofia Machalweska would experience one of the most violent eras in human history. She went on to become a nurse, and she was there for Stare Zadybie during the war.**

**Zofia took care of people brought in from the front lines and the airfield while working in the medical center on the same property that is now your family's home. Her presence provided solace where dread existed, and her hands steadied the injured. She survived the war, communist Poland, and decades of upheaval before dying in 1991, the year the world she had contributed to its survival finally started to recover.**

**In this tale, she is the great-great-grandmother. The dirt beneath your great-grandmother's house is woven with her quiet bravery.**

**In the heart of the Lublin Voivodeship, not far from Garwolin, lies the village of Stare Zadybie. Today it is quiet countryside fields, trees, and family homes. But beneath the soil and within the memories of those who lived there, this land holds a story of extraordinary depth.**

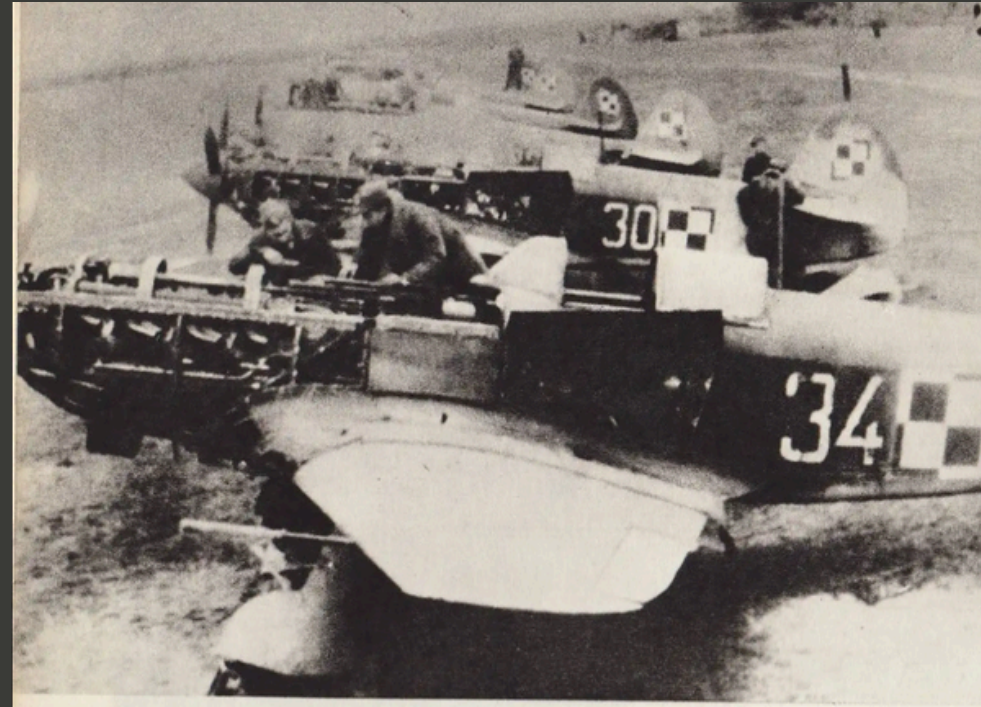


**During the summer and autumn of 1944, as the Second World War raged across Europe, this very land became a critical forward operating base. Allied aircraft thundered overhead. Polish and Soviet pilots flew combat missions from these fields. And among those who lived and worked here through the chaos of war was my family and their home.**

**The roar of Yakovlev warriors and the silent bravery of nurses tending to the injured formerly took place on the land that is now your great-grandmother's. Its history is etched in memory and genes rather than in a museum.**

**Units of the Polish 1st Fighter Aviation Regiment "Warszawa" finished relocating on August 19, 1944, from Gostomel near Kiev to Zadybie Stare airfield near Garwolin, southwest of Warsaw. Along the way, they passed through Wałimierzec and Dys near Lublin.**

**The Soviet 611th Assault Regiment, which had been directed to set up a forward operating post here, accompanied them. The airfield was located along the Vistula River, just a few kilometers from the front line where German forces were being driven west. To defend the Polish 1st Army, Polish and Soviet pilots conducted combat sorties, reconnaissance flights, and close-support operations from this location.**



**Six Yak-1b fighters from the 1st Warsaw Regiment, along with two Ilyushin Il-2s, took off at 8:30 on August 23, 1944, with the goal of locating and destroying German artillery positions. These expeditions were launched from the same planet that your great-grandmother would eventually inhabit.**

**The unit eventually arrived at Zadybie Stare airfield, which is southwest of Warsaw and close to Garwolin, on August 19.**

## *Yakovlev Yak-1*

The Yakovlev Yak-1 was a Soviet single-seat fighter aircraft one of the most important warplanes on the Eastern Front. Nimble, powerful, and effective, it was the aircraft flown by the Polish 1st Fighter Regiment as they made the Stare Zadybie airfield operational. The Yak-1b an improved variant was the primary mount of the regiment's pilots as they flew their first combat missions from this land.

### *Type*

Single-seat Fighter

### *Origin*

Soviet Union,  
1940

### *Speed*

592 km/h

### *Engine*

Klimov M-105PF

### *Used by*

1st Warsaw  
Regiment

### *At this*

*airfield from*

August 1944

**During World War II, a medical presence was necessary at every military airfield. There were people who waited on the ground to tend to the injured, ill, and dying when pilots engaged in combat and planes returned damaged or not at all.**

**That used to be my family's house. For the Stare Zadybie airport operations, the home functioned as a medical facility, a field hospital or assistance station. It was a place where people fought for their lives just as hard as they did in the skies, but instead of using bullets, they used bandages and medication.**

**And a woman my family will never forget who was at the center of that medical facility.**



**1904**

**Zofia Machalweska is Born**

The matriarch of this story comes into the world, in a Poland still under imperial partition. She will go on to become a nurse and a keeper of this land.

**1938**

**My Great-Grandmother is Born**

Born in Stare Zadybie, one year before the Second World War begins. The village is quiet but not for long.

**1939**

**Germany Invades Poland**

On 1st September 1939, Nazi Germany launches its invasion. Poland falls within weeks. The land around Stare Zadybie enters five years of occupation.

**August 1944**

**The Airfield Becomes Operational**

The Polish 1st Fighter Regiment "Warszawa" and the Soviet 611th Assault Regiment establish a forward base at Stare Zadybie. The land becomes a frontline military airfield, and the family home serves as a medical centre.

**August 23, 1944**

**First Combat Missions Fly**

Six Yak-1b fighters take off at 08:30 from this land to destroy German artillery positions. The first Yakovlev Yak-1 takes flight from the family's ground.

**August 30, 1944**

**Polish 1st Air Force Division Formed**

The three regiments operating from Zadybie Stare and nearby airfields are united into the Polish 1st Air Force Division equipped with 106 combat aircraft.

**1945**

**The War Ends**

The airfield closes. The medical centre is no longer needed. The land returns to the family. my great-grandmother, now 7 years old, grows up in the quiet that follows the storm.

**1991**

**Zofia Machalweska Passes Away**

At 87 years of age, Zofia nurse, mother, witness passes away. She lived to see the fall of communism and a free Poland. Her legacy lives on in the land and in those she raised.

A sad monument made from the damaged wing of a real WWII airplane stands in the middle of the village, serving as a powerful symbol of the airport that once existed there during the chaos of war. Dents, rivets, and faded paint that allude to the violence of the skies it once sailed over are still visible on the weather-worn and scarred metal. Now firmly anchored in the earth, the wing communicates a silent tale of sacrifice, urgency, and resiliency rather than carrying soldiers or missions. The villagers pass it with silent reverence, understanding that it is more than just a symbol but a genuine piece of history that links their quiet streets to a period when the sound of engines and the shadow of war

filled





**The moneument of  
the wing in the  
village**

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